

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Claims 1-3 (canceled).

4. (currently amended) A content distribution system according to claim—1 53, wherein said monitoring apparatus ~~issues~~ is operable to issue an encryption key in addition to said authentication information, and said distribution apparatus ~~distributes~~ is operable to distribute the content with the attached authentication information encrypted using said encryption key.

5. (currently amended) A content distribution system according to claim—1 53, wherein said distribution apparatus ~~embeds~~ is operable to embed said authentication information into the content using a digital watermarking technique.

6. (currently amended) A content distribution system according to claim—1 53, wherein said distribution apparatus ~~embeds~~ is operable to embed said authentication information into a distribution signal of the content using a digital watermarking technique.

7. (canceled).

8. (currently amended) A content distribution system according to claim—1 53, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said distribution apparatus ~~stores~~ being operable to store a distribution history for each content distributed via said predetermined distribution path in association with its specific content identification information, and ~~transfers~~ to transfer only said distribution history associated with the specific content identification information by masking said distribution history with a predetermined filter.

9. (canceled).

10. (currently amended) A content distribution system according to claim—1 53, wherein each content has specific content identification information, said distribution apparatus

~~stores-being operable to store a distribution history for each content distributed via said predetermined distribution path in association with its specific content identification information, and said monitoring apparatus causes content identification information by which said distribution history can be addressed to be contained in said authentication information.~~

11. (currently amended) A distribution method for distributing content ~~owned by a predetermined right owner from a distributor to one or more receivers~~, comprising:

~~issuing to a~~ the distributor authentication information indicating a consent to use the content including time identification information indicating a time of issuance and distributor identification information assigned to the distributor;

~~distributing the content via a predetermined distribution path with the authentication information attached thereto;~~

storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with specific content identification information; and

monitoring the distribution of the content in the predetermined distribution path to determine a validity of the content distribution based on the time identification information distributed with the content and to determine a distribution status of the distributed content based on the distribution history.

12. (canceled).

13. (canceled).

14. (original) A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said issuing step further includes issuing an encryption key, and said distributing step distributes the content with the attached authentication information encrypted using the encryption key.

15. (original) A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said distributing step embeds the authentication information into the content using a digital watermarking technique.

16. (original) A content distribution method according to claim 11, wherein said distributing step embeds the authentication information into a distribution signal of the content using a digital watermarking technique.

17. (canceled)

18. (currently amended) A content distribution method according to claim 11, ~~wherein each content has specific content identification information, said content distribution method further comprising:~~

~~—storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with its respective content identification information; and~~

extracting only the distribution history associated with specific content by masking the distribution history with a predetermined filter.

19. (canceled).

20. (currently amended) A content distribution method according to claim 11, ~~wherein each content has specific content identification information, said content distribution method further comprising:~~

~~—storing a distribution history for each content distributed via the predetermined distribution path in association with its respective content identification information,~~

wherein the issuing step issues authentication information containing identification information by which the distribution history can be addressed.

Claims 21-52 (canceled).

53. (new) A content distribution system for distributing content to one or more receivers, comprising:

a distribution apparatus operable to distribute the content to the one or more receivers;

a monitoring apparatus operable to issue, as authentication information, a set of (a) time identification information indicating a time of issuing the authentication information and (b) distributor identification information assigned to said distribution apparatus, and to monitor a content distribution operation carried out by said distribution apparatus,

said distribution apparatus being operable to conduct the content distribution operation to distribute the content via a predetermined distribution path, together with the authentication information received from said monitoring apparatus, and to store a distribution history including the authentication information corresponding to the content distributed via said predetermined distribution path,

wherein said monitoring apparatus is operable to determine a validity of the content distribution operation based on said time identification information and to determine a distribution status of the distributed content based on the distribution history.